

CITY COUNCIL MEETING
August 18, 1993

COMPLAINT REGARDING 911 SYSTEM

George Newmarch, P.O. Box 355, Lodi, expressed his dissatisfaction with the City of Lodi 911 System. The City Manager was directed to contact Mr. Newmarch to discuss the matter.

FILE NO. CC-16

COMMENTS BY MR. GEORGE NEWMARCH
AT THE AUGUST 18, 1993 CITY COUNCIL MEETING
REGARDING THE CITY OF LODI 911 EMERGENCY SYSTEM

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Newmarch: Mr. Mayor, City Council. I am George Newmarch, Post Office Box 355, Lodi, California, USA.

I'm just a poor country bumpkin trying to be a good citizen. Sometimes it would be easier to be a bad one. For instance, take what happened to me the other day in Lodi. I was driving home from work in my old Ford. On Rutledge, I came upon about a dozen teenagers running around in the street and throwing golf ball size rocks at each other. They wouldn't let me pass through, so I made a U-turn and went home another way. I figured somebody would get run over or otherwise hurt, so I called 911. That was a big mistake on my part. That call ruined the rest of the day for me. I should have been a bad citizen and forgot the whole thing. The grumpy 911 operator asked me if my call was a matter of life or death. My answer was "no", because at the time it wasn't. The grumpy operator told me my call was not an emergency, that I shouldn't have called 911, and that I should have called the non-emergency number. Her tone of voice made me feel like a criminal, for a moment anyway. Then I got real indignant. I remembered that about 2-1/2 hours before an adult male was beaten by a group of young people in the same neighborhood. Also, I remembered that around Christmas time I had called 911, was connected to Lodi Police Dispatch, and quickly had the problem taken care of, and that wasn't a matter of life and death either.

I decided that it was time to complain about 911. I found the non-emergency number after about five minutes thumbing through the Lodi phone book. I dialed it, but I got no answer. Then I called Chief Hansen's office. An extremely courteous lady there connected me with the Watch Commander. I told him of my problem and learned a very interesting thing about Lodi's 911 system. And that's why I am here talking to you tonight. According to the Watch Commander, the Lodi 911 operator cannot connect the caller with the Lodi Police Dispatch Office. The caller has to hang up and dial themselves. Why my call at Christmas time was successful was because I had called on a cellular telephone which automatically has the call routed through the Highway Patrol 911 operator, instead of the Lodi 911 operator. The CHP system allows the 911 caller to be connected to Lodi Dispatch while the Lodi 911 system does not. It seems that Lodi with its "we've got to be first" syndrome may have been first in getting the 911 system, but they may have gotten one that has some deficiencies.

I have two requests of the City Council. I realize you may not be able to act on them tonight, but perhaps you can have it acted on somehow or other. My first request is check and find out if what I've been told is true, assuming it is, get the 911 system fixed. Getting Police assistance shouldn't be an ordeal for the citizen. My second request, have criteria or guidelines put in with our utility bills telling citizens under what circumstances they can and cannot call Lodi 911. Do we have to see lots of blood, body parts, or what before we can call 911. Does it really have to be a life or death situation as the 911 operator indicated to me. Let us citizens know.

911 PHONE CALL PLACED BY MR. GEORGE NEWMARCH
ON AUGUST 10, 1993

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Dispatcher: 911, what's your emergency?

Newmarch: Hi, there's a group of kids throwing rocks across Rutledge Drive.
They made me stop...

Dispatcher: Okay, Sir, next time don't use the 911 for this, okay...

Newmarch: Okay.

Dispatcher: ...But I'll have someone go through the area, okay.

Newmarch: Okay, I'll just beat 'em up myself...okay.

Dispatcher: Excuse me?...What's that?

(AT THIS POINT, MR. NEWMARCH ENDED THE CONVERSATION BY HANGING UP THE RECEIVER)